

the Myth Graveyard

GKG's School of Myth Strategy - The Push Factor

This article/webpage originally published at thegjol/GateOfStorms.net

(<http://forum.gateofstorms.net/viewforum.php?f=8>)

originally published on 2012-11-15

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[note: approved -- mg]

Differing schools of strategic thought...

Lately there has been a lot of talk about strategy. The strategy in this year's mwc finals, last year's mwc finals, the worst captains, who's to blame for bad strategies, blah blah blah. On the one end of the spectrum you have Raziel who grandfathered the Raziel School of Myth Strategy and his followers in Ducky, East Wind, maybe even Shaister now, and others. In the Raziel School of Myth Strategy they focus not on pushing but passive reaction to the push, and when they do attempt to do pushes it is just really, really horrible. On the opposite end of the spectrum you have GKG's School of Myth Strategy. In my School of Myth Strategy we have mastered the art of the push, and instead of being reactive we are proactive on the battlefield. We bend the opponent to our will, make them fall into our hands, and make them play our game, our way.

Talking about this year's mwc finals strategy, I feel like some people are misrepresenting my work talking about always assume rushes against GKG, and that I am just only about rushes or something. This is false, there is more to the story than that. So this motivated me to write now my 4th article about myth strategy and tactics, simply entitled GKG's School of Myth Strategy – The Push Factor. Here I will reveal the full story behind my method, my thoughts, tricks of the trade, and so forth. It seems only more necessary since every time I captain people are always wondering, “What is GKG going to do?” So I might as well let everyone in on the secrets behind my thinking. Unfortunately I am years too late in writing this, as we come to the possible end of Myth as we know it, but before I possibly wither away into retirement along with many of the other few of us still around, I wanted to set the record straight about all of this. An article like this could have probably prevented the travesty that is the mwcII finals, but on the slim chance that there is another myth large team tournament, maybe it could prevent another mwcII finals from happening again.

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One myth about myth strategy is that there is always a counter to every strategy, which is false. Usually there is 1 best strategy, then maybe 2 or 3 other good ones at the very most which are probably still pretty similar to the 1 best one, and the quality starts rapidly declining from there the more you deviate from the best strategy. Sometimes the best strategy is so dominant the only way to “counter” it is to mirror it as closely as possible. An example of this is looking upon the mwc11 finals. I had made something probably close to the most perfect strategies possible on all of those map/games. You aren’t going to find a good counter to any of them, and I certainly welcome any one to try and do so. Instead you are going to find the best way to fight them is with a very very similar strategy themselves.

If you think you have the best strategy and there is an easy way to counter it, then you don’t actually have the best strategy. The counter to your strategy is probably better, and you still need to keep working towards finding the best. Keep looking for counters to the strategies you devise until you rest upon one where the best "counter" is pretty much the same strategy itself. Now you have found the perfect strategy. The most common and easiest way to illustrate this is when people do very heavy 1 jugger flanks with weak or no mids. Well the quick and easy counter to that is usually going to be a heavy mid since the quickest way to travel through the map and control most of it is a straight line through mid. Now this may be negated by the map’s terrain and the gametype...but this is rarely the case. More on that later. The bottomline is the best strategies are always so versatile that there is no counter to it. However as long as the disparity in the quality of the strategies is relatively close, then both teams have a fighting chance of winning, which is usually what happens in quality high caliber tournament games. Though as we have all just seen this is not always the case either.

Push vs. Rush...

First I would like to quickly differentiate between a rush and a push as I will be writing about both later. A push is just moving your opponent around the map. Many things contribute to what I like to call, the “push-factor.” Several things contribute to the push-factor of a force:

1. Player skill. Better players click and micro better, faster, thus pushing better. 1v1 ability matters a lot here. So yes, 1v1 ability does matter a lot in team play.
2. Overwhelming force. More units push less units better.
3. Overwhelming players. More players to out-micro them. Re-distribution of units throughout the game contributes greatly to maximizing this point. That is also those 2v1 and 3v2 matchups I keep talking about.
4. Mismatched forces. Similarly sized forces, but one is still inferior to the other in the fight. This would be a case of one force not having the right units/tools to properly engage the enemy.

A rush is simply throwing faster units at the enemy to run them down. However a rush needs a few things to be successful:

1. Overwhelming force. Hard to rush something bigger than you. You also need to overpower the inevitable ranged hits you are going to take. Expect 3-5 volleys of ranged hits on your way in. Also the less overwhelming you are, the longer it is going to take to smother their ranged units, and thus the more ranged hits you are going to take.
2. Speed. Hard to rush something faster than you. Also the longer it takes the more ranged hits you are going to take.
3. Superior position. Hard to rush uphill through a choke. Pinches/surrounds also help to again close the distance quicker.

The Art of the Push

All of those things are accomplished through a good push. In high caliber tournament play, rarely do you see blatant rushes. Everyone scouts too well, and can see it coming from a mile away. But you don't use rushes just to rush right in right away on the 1st move. In reality you use rushes to push them, and set something up from there. It is not the 1st move that counts, it is the 2nd and 3rd move, and beyond. This is a big difference between tournament play and rabble games. People can quickly reinforce each other. However in reinforcing, they open up a weakness somewhere else where their reinforcements just came from. And that is the magical advantage of pushes. The push isn't what does the damage directly, it is forcing the opponent to open up the door elsewhere. That is the art of the push.

The Importance of The Push Factor

When you are making a strategy, your whole goal is to first maximize your push-factor on the map. The #1 reason people do not maximize their push factor is because of archers. Everyone wants to get archers, which are the least pushy units on the map point for point. However, if you do not maximize your push-factor for whatever reason, this is a detailed description of what is going to happen to you against a smart opponent; and this will happen every single time:

First you are going to go out, scout and match up against them, and see their overwhelming push forces. They are going to be very spread out, probably a 3 prong, to really reach their push factor advantage all over the map. If you aren't spread out already, you soon will be, as they are now going to be forcing you to play into their strategy. You may have overwhelming units to hold them on 1 or 2 fronts, but somewhere you are going to be weak. Every little push by them is going to require a huge reinforcement response from you in order to match their push factor on that front and prevent it from being completely rushed and overrun. At this point, there is only 1 of 2 things that is going to happen:

1. You try to push them back on that reinforced front with that overwhelming force. They just yield ground to you, either to buy time for them to step through that huge door you left open elsewhere to go for the game objective, or otherwise to spread you out and use their speed to shift all

of their forces onto that one now-exposed front as the rest of your army is desperately trying to catch up to them. This is usually the worse of the two choices.

2. The other possibility is that you are smart enough to realize that you cannot push them back otherwise you spread yourself out. However if you are smart enough to realize this, then you are also smart enough to realize that you are probably already fucked either way. So they take that huge door you left open elsewhere and now they are pushing you around the map like a ragdoll as you struggle to not be completely surrounded or worse yet have them run right by you to the game objective. If they haven't outright rushed you already, then they have you pinned somewhere in a turtled up position as they control the vast majority of the map. Now they are just staring at you, taunting you outside your unit's range, and you sooner or later finally realize what they are doing. They are running the timer out. And as you wait for a few more minutes in agony looking into your impending doom, in that final minute you can rest assured that you will be rushed for a guaranteed win-or-tie scenario for them, but most likely a straight out win.

So now that you understand the great importance of maximizing your team strategy's push-factor, let's get into how to do it.

Melee vs Ranged

The whole strategy of this game revolves around the relationship between melee and ranged units, and then applying that relationship to the map's terrain and gametype that you are planning for. I am well known to be one of the few to be fanatical about melee, having hosted the only melee tournament ever in this game. Everyone brags about their skill with ranged units, or throw, etc, but rarely do you see people talking about melee skill. It is very inglorious and underrated job. Roughly half of the units in this game are melee units (actually maybe even more than half), so they are just as important as the ranged units. Having extensive experience with strictly melee-only battles gives you a good idea of the power of certain melee units over other melee units, which is an important skill for the very first thing I look for when planning for a game:

Step 1: Look at the balance in power between the melee units on the map, and the ranged units on the map.

Perhaps the best example of overpowered ranged units taken to the extreme is Venice. This is why I hate it so much. You have warlocks, mortars, archers, and even pus set against warriors, thrall, and a jman. It is the most lopsided balance towards ranged units ever. A trade nearly void of all semblance of melee is usually best.

On the other side of that spectrum you have a map like tamera lin light, where you have massive amounts of stygs, warriors, and pus set against archers and only dorfs to keep them in check. Any trade for archers on this is a complete waste (yet I see so many people still get them.) There are other

maps with the same set of units where archers are viable, but the difference here is the sheer number of unit points and the high maximum trading values on the melee, which allow you to achieve much higher push-factor.

At this point in the process, just after this 1st step, maybe half the time it is balanced where neither is more dominant than the other, but the other half of the time you can usually find a slight leaning towards one side over the other. However as you keep moving through the steps, you are going to almost always find it significantly leaning towards one way or the other.

Push Factor in Units

Step 2: Look at the push-factor of the units.

Stronger melee units obviously push better. Herons are particularly effective though because they can eat a direct arty shot and heal like it never happened. More melee units does not automatically significantly increase your push factor either. Many melee units are fodder in comparison to the other melee units. A good example of this are brigands, and myrmidons which are easily the most useless melee units in myth. Thrall and warriors are also sometimes too weak if they are on a map with other much more powerful melee units, even just herons or zerks. In which case they are just fodder that vets the enemy melee units, which is also another important factor to consider. The only stronger melee unit warriors are decently effective against are stygians. So that would be the number one cause to not max melee, because some of the melee types are just too weak compared to others. Maybe not everyone knows what ranged units push better than others though.

Dwarves and fetch are the foundation of all pushes with melee. And when I say dwarves I mean all manner of dwarves, regular dwarves, dorf heroes, and morts. This has everything to do with their power, and nature as indirect fire units, the ability to fire from behind the protection of your melee formation. And also because they are difficult or impossible to block or dodge.

Pus and the ability to bottle pus (need dwarves easy access to water on the map for that) also helps contribute to melee pushes.

Archers, soulless, warlocks, bre'unor are not effective for pushes. This is because they can all be blocked or dodged. So these are the last things you should be trading for with your excess points, the possible exception being soulless if there are a lot of good hills where soulless can achieve good map control from. In which case they can't move from the hill, so that is more of an anti-push factor. But if the hill is particularly large or lengthy then they can help push off the rest of your forces through the range of that hill.

Archers with flame arrows are obviously more effective, but double check the terrain to see how flammable it is. Usually this isn't a big enough factor to significantly change your trade for archers. But on extremely flammable terrain with flame arrows, you should always get at least some. It doesn't

mean you need to max them though, or even get a lot of them. Terrain can only be burnt once remember.

I think I covered all of the ranged units then.

Oversaturation of Units

The reason you don't always max dwarves is because you get an oversaturation of them. Dwarves are force-multipliers but the more you add into the mix the less push that 1 additional dwarf is going to give you. The less marginal bang for your buck. I think that is an economics concept as well but I don't remember the terminology anymore from that class. But that ties back into my previous article about Myth Economics in myth strategy as well. The same thing with weak melee types, sometimes you get some just for a little extra meat in your melee pack, or to be fodder to be put in front and take the blows instead of your better melee units. But you never max them either. Oversaturation can also often occur with archers and warlocks.

The exact point of oversaturation is of course open to debate, but there is usually a reasonable number range that can be widely agreed upon.

Some units can almost never be oversaturated. This is because when bunge assigned point values to these units they under-estimated their power greatly, so you always get a surplus in power when trading for them, unless somehow you do not have enough points to max them all right away, which I have never seen to be the case on any map yet. These units are heron guards, fetch, myrkridia, and of course trow, forest giants, and myrk giants. You will always max these units immediately (possibly -1 myrk or heron if it helps use up un-used points.) In reality to balance out units and make a greater variety of viable trades, bunge should have made herons 4-5 points, fetch 8-9 points, myrks around 5-6 points, trow and forest giants around 32 points, and myrk giants probably around 40. Rough estimates.

Push Factor in the Gametype

Step 3: Look at the game-type.

Gametype is a huge factor in how pushy you can be. This is due to anchor-points with the game objective, points on the map that you have to guard. So here is the list of gametypes that are favorable to pushes/rushes, roughly in some semblance of order starting from the rushiest at the top and working its way down:

Capture the Flag

Flag Rally

Assassin

Balls on Parade

Scavenger Hunt

King of the Hill (depending on the game time, 8 minutes being average, less rushy obviously with longer gametime, gets progressively rushier as the

gametime runs out.)

Take note that most of the time the anchor-points are fixed flags, but for BoP and usually assassin, they can be roaming anchor-points. But they are still anchor-points none-the-less. Anchor-points are anything you can pin your opponent to, such that they have to guard it, and cannot leave that point (i.e. cannot push away from it, anchored to it.)

These are the game objectives that do not favor pushes/rushes:

Body Count

Territories

Captures

Last Man on the Hill

Steal the Bacon

These game-types do not have anchor points, until sudden death (except BC obviously.) However once sudden death comes near, they become as good of anchor points as any of the other pro-push/rush gametypes. You will have to decide fully one way or another depending on the unit set and map, which route of attack you plan to use. Either focus on winning the BC fight throughout the game and worry about tags near the end with hopefully a % advantage. Or a camp fest to stay alive and run the timer out for a last minute end-game rush. The latter is much more rare, and usually accompanies a lot of sunk thrall. So the lesson learned here, is nearly every game type supports pushes in some way, either from start to finish, or at the very least it is something to consider for the end-game.

Push Factor in the Terrain

5 things to look for:

1. Hills. Any height advantage anywhere, this is passable terrain by some or all of the units.
2. Passable water. Ability to make dorf bottles if needed. Also renders dwarves mostly in-effective in it.
3. Impassable water. Places to sink units, impassable by some or all of the other units.
4. Impassable land. Cliffs, walls, steep hills, deep water. Any impassable terrain by some or all of the units.
5. Choke points. Created by impassable terrain.

When I see these things, what I actually see is plus or minus to the push factor. Usually it is minus, because any oddities in terrain usually make it more difficult to push. The most ideal terrain for pushing is perfectly flat and open. The only advantaged terrain for pushing would be passable water, or weather such as snow and rain which all increase chances for duds for dwarves obviously. This greatly changes with the introduction of fetch though however, so that is something else to consider. So impassable terrain, choke points, hills, all mean less push factor, and more campy. The only way

to get around this, is if you are able to by-pass those positions on the map and find open flat terrain in the backfield.

Positions that are easy to hold are also important to consider, because although you can't really push beyond them without losing your advantage, they of course are still somewhat of an anti-push against the opponent. Really strong game-changing holding positions are rare however, you are talking then about maps like The Great Divide.

The Foundations of Strategy

So now you have an accurate assessment of the overall pushiness of the units, the gametype, and the terrain. Maybe you even have a good idea about your player's abilities as well, such as which units and squads they would be best at handling. At this point you should be able to quickly figure out what to trade for to maximize your push factor.

After trading your next question would be, where do I send everyone? Well this is the easy part to figure out. First of all, you must have a big enough force to maintain control of the middle of the map. Control of the middle of the map is the foundation of all strategy. It is the quickest way to get to anywhere else on the map, and to be able to surround and pin the opponent. However keeping in mind, that in order to pin the opponent, you must be able to out-push them to keep them in place, otherwise they will just push you on point and break out of it and then you are the one now that is screwed as your forces are all spread out. A lot of times, even from supposedly respectable captains and strategists in high caliber tournament setting, I see them trying to do 1 jugger flanks with a weak middle or even no middle at all. This is a huge mistake almost all of the time.

After a good strong middle force is made to be the foundation for you to push out, reinforce and maintain your army's overall positional balance from, you need to decide usually between a 2 prong and a 3 prong. That is usually going to be based on the terrain and choke points. You don't want to cluster too many units at one location. That would be your primary reason to do a 3 prong, to get the full effectiveness of your units. Clustering too many units on one front through a choke-point is bad. This is also why those 1 jugger flanks often fail. They get held up due to bad terrain, or because the units on the map aren't quick enough and don't have a big enough push factor to begin with, or the simple fact that it takes them longer to flank wide than it does to go straight through middle, and thus fail from positioning.

When considering other tactical nuances on a map such as wierd funky units, items on the ground, wierd abilities, wierd things about the map, etc., always be asking yourself, "How does this affect the push factor?"

Also I almost forgot to mention, you should never yield ground without good reason. Given equal pushing forces, you cannot just second guess yourself and yield ground to the opponent. They are going to use that against you and pin you on your anchor points, then get you into that near-guaranteed win-

or-tie scenario. Remember that the best defense, is always a good offense. The best way to defend is a light flag defense hidden behind a strong pushing force. If it turns into a race for flags, hopefully you had the stronger middle so that you can be quicker, or can out-fight them. A prime example of this, is what NC does in game 3 alive in winter in the mwc11 finals. They start with a stronger mid with all of their throw but second-guess themselves, hesitate, and start splitting off to double back reacting to defend a flank. However since they had control of mid they would have easily capitalized on this, and at the very least created problems for us by being quicker in flags than us through middle. Their lack of aggression was so incredibly disappointing.

In Closing...

If I do a lot of so-called “rushes” it is only because that was the biggest push-factor on that particular set of map/games. I do not do rushes for the sake of doing rushes. And you should look for the way to be able to max out your ability to push as well, regardless. This is why I have preached about the underrated importance of pushing and controlling the map for so long. If you can push your opponent around wherever you want, what on earth can your opponent possibly do to you, even if there is no fighting taking place?

So I have just given up my strategic advantage in myth by sharing all of my strategic secrets. I have already proven what they are capable of so there is no point in holding onto them any longer in the face of the possible end of myth. If there is another large team tournament, I would hope those captains would refer back to this article in an effort to increase the quality of the matches. Only together can we put an end to the incorrect line of thought created by the horrible teachings of the Raziel School of Myth Strategy.

So hopefully I have set the record straight. This is what wrong with the strategies in the many tournament games I have spoken about them being oh so very wrong in. And this is why they are wrong. And this is how you can fix them.

Sincerely Yours,
GKG

Improving myth tournament matches, one long article at a time.

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